8 July 2010

Mr Andrew Rolfe
Director, Higher Education
NSW Department of Education and Training
Level 6, Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email: Andrew.R Rolfe@det.nsw.edu.au

Dear Mr Rolfe

**NSW Tertiary Education Plan and Knowledge Statement**

*Introduction*

I refer to the recent letter from the Minister of Education and Training and the Minister for Science and Medical Research regarding the call for submissions in response to the Discussion Paper for a NSW Tertiary Education Plan.

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,300 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues.

*Discussion Paper*

This submission has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by Members of the Institute and the following comments are made in relation to the Discussion Paper:

1. The Institute supports the State and Federal Government’s recognition of the important role that tertiary education plays in strengthening the Australian economy through innovation, research and jobs. The Institute also recognises the many social benefits achieved by enhancing levels of education and access to opportunities.

2. Many of the principles of the paper, including the need to make tertiary education more accessible to prospective students and researchers, particularly those based in regional areas, are supported. The Institute also recognises the need to make tertiary education more accessible and available to the growing populations of Sydney’s Western Suburbs, particularly as this area is designated as one of the key growth areas for younger Australians over the next 25 years.
3. Whilst many of the objectives of the paper are generally supported, the Institute believes that it is in the funding, co-ordination and implementation of these principles where the challenge lies.

4. The Institute also believes that tertiary education should be about more than 18 to 25 years olds. It should be flexible enough to allow mature age students to return to tertiary education and build on their working skills and knowledge to undertake effective research.

5. The paper should also develop further how universities and TAFE could enable a greater number of mature age students to return to study, to re-skill or advance their knowledge without needing to give up or significantly reduce work commitments.

6. The Institute understands that enhancing opportunities for education is about opening the pathways for more people of all age groups to access education by:
   - Improving the aspirations of school leavers to undertake additional education.
   - Making it more attractive for industry to encourage workers to return to education and in turn enhancing the flexibility of studying whilst working (without the need to significantly sacrifice income).

7. To support business and industry growth, the Institute also encourages additional research as to what skills will be required in the future i.e. environmental, energy, Information Technology.

8. Finally, the Institute endorses the Government’s priority research areas and in particular ‘Better Transport and Liveable Cities’. The Institute would add to the description of the latter however, by adding the need to better research the social and economic factors that build a liveable city.

**PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment**

The Planning Institute has undertaken research into planning education and employment related directly to the planning profession. The National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment, completed in 2004, by the Institute had support from all State and Territory planning departments and responded to serious concerns about the shortage of planners, their workplace environments and their professional training. The Inquiry found serious labour market deficiencies, concerns that planners were not always able to access appropriate training, and widespread acknowledgement that most planners experience unacceptable stress in the workplace. The Inquiry proposed a range of recommendations to address the full range of employment, workplace and professional development issues. A copy of the Findings and Recommendations of the Inquiry is included with this letter.

**PIA Education Policy**

The Institute accredits undergraduate and postgraduate planning programs at Australian universities to provide professional recognition and to provide for Membership of the Institute. The **PIA Education Policy**, which sets the requirements and process for accreditation of tertiary qualifications in planning, is currently under review. The context of the current review of the education policy includes:

- The recognition of specialised planning disciplines (mirrored in the development of Chapters within the Institute) outside of the traditional urban and regional planning with the implication that specialist types of planning skill sets have emerged and will be required by the planning industry.
Recognition that universities are not the only providers of planning education, and the need to identify roles of diverse providers in skilling people to take part in planning (including growth of vocational programs for planning assistants).

The move by the Institute to the formal certification of planners as Certified Practicing Planners and a much greater focus by the Institute on professional development (PD).

The accreditation of courses and the need to ensure that content is relevant to the profession, the needs of employers and the practice of planning.

The rapid growth in the number of universities seeking accreditation or interim accreditation for new courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The findings and recommendations of the Institutes 2004 National Inquiry into Planning Education & Employment in respect to planning education.

The widening role of planning including the observation that an undergraduate planning program cannot be ‘all things to all people’.

Moves by some universities in Australia to follow overseas degree models (especially the ‘Bologna model’ with generic undergraduate degrees and professional or specialised postgraduate degrees).

Increasing pressure for planning programs (especially undergraduate) to impart generic skills and to deliver an all-round education in theoretical and practical aspects of planning.

Changes in the mix of undergraduate and postgraduate planning programs across Australia.

The pressure on planning programs to consider and include a range of subjects and disciplines such as GIS, environmental management, urban design and project management.

Increasing numbers of international students in Australian planning programs, many of whom seek permanent residency on completion of their studies.

Changed resourcing of universities, impacts on planning programs and the growing need to supplement or replace diminishing Commonwealth funding.

The views of employers (and need to address an increasingly diverse set of employers), as planning diversifies.

The Institute welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Discussion Paper for a NSW Tertiary Education Plan. Please contact the State Manager for the Institute, Robyn Vincin, on telephone number (02) 8904 1011 or email nswmanager@planning.org.au should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter.

Thank you for inviting the Institute to comment on the Discussion Paper.

Yours Sincerely

Tony McNamara
NSW President